

Jaundice

Yellowish appearance of the whites of the eyes and the skin of many newborn babies



Signs

- Yellow color of the whites of the eyes, skin and gums.
- If the jaundice is severe, you may see:
 - Green, seedy and watery stools that may occur at the same time as the yellowness.
 - That your baby may be less active and sleeps more than usual.
 - That your baby may sleep through normal feeding times.
 - Signs of dehydration.



What to Know

- Jaundice is usually a normal adjustment to living outside the womb. Usually no treatment is necessary.
- Jaundice is a common and usually harmless condition in newborn babies. It can occur when there is too much bilirubin present in the bloodstream.
- Jaundice can occur for other reasons:
 - Babies who are bruised at the time of birth
 - Babies born to diabetic mothers
 - Babies born with certain diseases or abnormalities
- It usually appears on the second or third day of life in healthy, full-term babies and often disappears within a week.
- Breastfed babies are more likely to have jaundice.

- Continue frequent breastfeeding (every two hours) unless otherwise directed by your health care provider.
- The jaundice may take four to six weeks to clear up.
- Premature babies are more likely to have jaundice.
 - It may appear later and last longer, becoming most noticeable between the fifth and seventh day of life.
- If jaundice is present at birth or appears within the first 24 hours of life, treatment may be necessary and will vary according to cause and severity.
- If the jaundice is mild, your health care provider may order phototherapy at home by using:
 - Sunlight.
 - Artificial light.
 - Fiberoptic blanket. (This special blanket is wrapped around the baby's upper body while the baby is dressed and/or held.)
- Severe jaundice can be damaging to your baby's health, so close monitoring and treatment by your health care provider is needed.

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What to Do

- Your baby's skin color and whites of the eyes should be observed daily for two weeks in natural sunlight.
 - It may be helpful to have a friend or family member look at your baby's skin color and whites of the eyes.
- Follow your health care provider's instructions for follow-up lab work and recommended treatment.



When to Call Your Health Care Provider

- If the yellowness increases or spreads to more parts of the body.
- If your baby has green, seedy and watery stools that may occur at the same time as the yellowness.
- If your baby is difficult to awaken or keep awake for feedings.
- If your baby shows signs of dehydration:
 - Four or fewer wet diapers in 24 hours
 - Dry mouth
 - Sunken eyes
 - Sunken soft spot on head (fontanel)
 - Extreme irritability
 - Listlessness (decreased activity)
 - Possibly no tears

